April 6, 2006

MEMORANDUM

To: Dr. Vermelle J. Johnson, Chairman, and Members of the Committee on

Academic Affairs and Licensing

From: Dr. Gail M. Morrison, Director of Academic Affairs and Licensing

Report on New Award for FY 2006-07
Center of Excellence (Education) Program

Background

Requests for Proposals for Centers of Excellence for the FY 2006-07 project year were issued to all eligible public and private institutions in September 1, 2005. At the request of the Education Oversight Committee, proposals were requested that focus on literacy in adolescent education. Five proposals were received for consideration:

- Clemson University
 Center of Excellence for Genetics and Life Science
- ❖ College of Charleston Center of Excellence for the Advancement of New Literacies in Middle Grades
- ❖ Furman University Center of Excellence in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of other Language
- ❖ Lander University Center for Excellence in Adolescent Literacy and Learning
- University of South Carolina Aiken
 Center of Excellence for Language Literacy in Science (CELLS)

A Review Panel consisting of one high school English teacher, two representatives from higher education, one representative from the Department of Education, one representative from the Middle Level Teacher Education Initiative and one staff member from the Commission on Higher Education was appointed to review the proposals and to make recommendations. The Panel Report is attached (**Attachment 1**). The Panel was chaired by Dr. Ronald Joekel, a professor from the University of Nebraska. The report of the Review Panel is attached (**Attachment 2**). Abstracts for the five proposed Centers are also attached (**Attachment 3**).

Discussion

The Review Panel met on March 13, 2006, to receive presentations from the representatives from each institution and discuss the merits of each proposed center. The panel's recommendation is to fund the proposed center from the College of Charleston. The panel members conducted a lengthy discussion about the proposals and concluded that the proposed center from the College of Charleston rated the highest in the panel's discussion. The purpose of the Center of Excellence for the Advancement of New Literacies in Middle Grades is to ultimately increase the literacy/reading development of diverse and struggling middle school students and their teachers in the Charleston County School District by improving school culture and engagement in learning through school-wide focus of the impact on literacy across all content areas that will result in a New Literacies in Middle Grades Model that can be disseminated across the state to school districts and colleagues. The project addressed both the pre-service and in-service aspects of increasing middle level teachers' understanding and knowledge of improving education in literacy for middle level students.

The proposed centers from USC-Aiken, Furman University, Lander University, and Clemson University had salient features and potential, but the panel was charged with selecting one proposal they felt had the most promise to fulfill the purpose of the Center of Excellence Program Guidelines and improving the literacy/reading of middle level students. In FY 2005-06, the S.C. General Assembly approved the Commission's request for an appropriation of \$685,657. With five centers in the second, third, and fourth years of funding (**Attachment 4**), funding is available for only one new for FY 2006-07.

The proposed center from USC-Aiken, a Center of Excellence for Language Literacy in Science (CELLS), was strongly considered for funding. The purpose of the center was to develop and model state-of-the-art in-service and pre-service training programs that concentrated on literacy/reading and science at the middle school level. The proposal appeared to stray away from the title of the Center, which stated language literacy in science. Yet, in reading the proposal, the panel found social studies, math, and English/LA related to the sciences. The proposal needed more specificity in regard to

strategies to help teachers identify the needs of middle level schools and strategies of instruction in literacy.

The proposed Center of Excellence in TESOL from Furman University also had strong potential for funding. The Center would provide year-long, sustainable professional development to increase student achievement for diverse learners through TESOL, enhanced literacy across the curriculum, and instructional strategies that incorporate advanced technology and needs of all learners. The panel was impressed with the uniqueness of the proposal and appreciated the passion that Dr. Troy Terry exhibited in his presentation. The proposal guidelines called for middle level literacy and the panel felt that the Furman proposal didn't address this sufficiently.

A Center of Excellence for the Enhancement of Middle School Literacy was proposed by Lander University. The primary purpose of the Center was to provide enhanced literacy opportunities for areas middle school learners through technology, infusion of literacy across content areas, and accommodating and supporting the needs of a broad spectrum of diverse learners. A unique aspect of the proposal was the inclusion of Special Education pre-service students at Lander University. The panel felt the proposal did not provide enough specificity in how it would promote middle level literacy for students. Goals and objectives were not specified and it was difficult to get a sense of the project other than in broad generalities. A concern was expressed that there did not appear to be a faculty member with expertise in middle level education as a member of the center team. It wasn't clear to the panel what scholarships for special education students would do to contribute to the improvement of literacy for middle level students.

Clemson University proposed the creation of a Center of Excellence in Genetics and Life Sciences. The purpose of the center was to develop a comprehensive and innovative program to improve instruction in science literacy/reading levels at middle schools that failed to meet Adequate Yearly Progress. The review panel found this proposal intriguing, but missing the basic need of addressing literacy/reading for middle level students. There was a strong academic emphasis on science content, but meeting the needs of low achieving middle school students was lacking. Evidence of a stronger relationship to the College of Education was felt to be needed for such a project to truly meet the needs of middle level students. Little attention was given to specific strategies of instruction to identify and meet the based needs of middle level teachers and adolescents in transition. The proposal guidelines called for emphasis on improving the literacy/reading of low achieving middle level students and this proposal appears to be a means to continue programs already in existence with a strong academic content the driving force rather than focusing on the needs of improving the literacy of low achieving middle level students.

These proposals have been referred to the Commission's *Improving Teacher Quality Competitive Grants Program* and urged to adopt their proposals to the requirements of that program, and submit them for funding, or, they might revise the proposals and resubmit to next year's Center of Excellence (Education) competition.

Recommendation

In keeping with authority previously delegated to it by the Commission, the staff recommends that the Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing commend favorably to the Review Panel's recommendation and approve an award to the College of Charleston to establish the Center of Excellence for the Advancement of New Literacies in Middle Grades in the amount of \$150,000, pending submission of 1) the appropriate support letters of commitment from low-performing districts/schools; 2) a revised assessment; and 3) a plan of action for specific teaching strategies for literacy/reading for middle school students.

Attachment 1: Report of the Review Panel

Attachment 2: Review Panel
Attachment 3: Proposal Abstracts

REPORT OF THE REVIEW PANEL

SOUTH CAROLINA COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE PROGRAMS EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 1984

April 6, 2006

PROJECT YEAR 2006-2007

The South Carolina Commission on Higher Education appointed a Panel to review proposals submitted to the Commission for the establishment of Centers of Excellence for the Fiscal Year 2006-2007. The Panel met on March 13, 2006, at the Commission Office, to interview teams representing the five colleges and universities that had submitted proposals to the Commission and to make recommendations to the Commission about the disposition of the proposals. A list of Panel members and their affiliation is attached to this report (Attachment 1).

In advance of the meeting, members of the Review Panel were sent the *Guidelines* for Submission of Proposals –Centers of Excellence Education Improvement Act of 1984, five proposals that had been submitted by colleges and universities for consideration for the project year 2006-2007. Members were asked to read and acquaint themselves with the Guidelines and the five proposals prior to the March 13, 2006 meeting. Panel members were asked to complete a Proposal Review Rubric/Rating Form for each of the five proposals.

The Panel recognizes the substantial effort and institutional commitment that goes into conceptualizing, developing, and writing proposals following the Commission's guidelines. The five institutions submitting proposals are to be congratulated for undertaking this task and creating proposals to enhance the education for students in South Carolina Schools.

In addition to reading the proposals prior to the March 13 meeting, Panel members conducted interviews with teams representing each of the five institutions submitting proposals. The teams were comprised of administration/faculty/ from the institutions of higher education and representatives from the K-12 schools who were partners in the proposal.

A schedule was developed whereby the proposal team was assigned thirty minutes to make a presentation on their proposal and answer question questions from Panel members. In each instance, the interview ran longer than thirty minutes. Following the interviews, the Panel discussed each proposal at some lengths identifying the strengths of each proposal as well as any areas of concern. All five of the proposals were immediately identified as having potential for the development of literacy/reading programs that will improve instruction at the middle school level.

The five proposals and their titles presented in alphabetical order were:

	Center of Excellence for the			
College of Charleston	Advancement of New Literacies in			
	Middle Grades			
Clamaan University	Center of Excellence in Genetics and			
Clemson University	Life Sciences			
Furman University	Center of Excellence in TESOL			
	Center of Excellence for the			
Lander University	Enhancement of Middle School			
	Literacy			
University of South Carolina Ailson	Center of Excellence for Language			
University of South Carolina Aiken	Literacy in Science.			

All five proposals had salient features and potential, but the committee was charged with selecting the one proposal they felt had the most promise to fulfill the purpose of the Center of Excellence Program Guidelines and improving the literacy/reading of middle level students.

RECOMMENDATION

We recommend funding for the College of Charleston proposed *Center of Excellence for the Advancement of New Literacies in Middle Grades.* The purpose of the Center is to ultimately increase the literacy/reading development of diverse and struggling middle school students and their teachers in the Charleston County School District. Four (4) major goals and four (4) objectives are identified to fulfill the promise of the Center.

GOALS

- 1. Increase pre-service teachers and in-service teacher's depth of knowledge and Effectiveness in teaching New Literacies in Middle Grades.
- 2. Improve school culture and engagement in learning through school-wide focus of the impact on literacy across all content areas that will result in a New Literacies

- in Middle Grades Model that can be disseminated across the state to school districts and colleges.
- 3. Improve reading student achievement scores in targeted low-achieving middle schools.
- 4. Encourage sharing of relevant and research-based instructional practices across South Carolina for the improvement of middle school literacies.

OBJECTIVES

- 1. Advance understanding and teaching strategies of New Literacies in Middle Grades among pre-service teachers through professional development, coursework, and collective study groups.
- 2. Implement subject/content-oriented collective study groups in targeted schools through professional development and College of Charleston faculty on-site coaching support.
- 3. Acknowledge the vast literacy competencies in young adolescent's literacy repertoires through informal discussion and classroom observations.
- 4. Link out-of-school and in-school literacies to assist pre-service teachers, in-service teachers and middle school students in becoming better users of text in the 21st. century world through coursework and professional development.

The Center will be devoted to using a 21st. century definition of reading that conceptualizes literacy as socially-situated and culturally-constructed (Barton, Hamilton, and Ivanic, 2000).

Collective study groups will share a core of reading on New Literacies. Study groups will meet weekly to discuss the readings and to explore appropriately related literacy strategies. Members will develop a plan to implement these strategies in their respective classrooms and share results at the next meeting. After sharing strategies and engaging in a meaningful dialogue, they will collectively decide on a course of action to apply new content.

Six (6) middle schools in the Charleston County School District are targeted for participation. Alice Birney Middle School, Brentwood Middle School, McClellanville Middle School Morningside Middle School, R.D. Schroder Middle School, and West Ashley Middle School. A total of 3,782 students were served in these schools during 2005 according to the Annual School Report Card. Of these students, 3,033 were from minority populations. Additionally, 684 or 18% of the students educated in these schools had identified disabilities. All of the schools had unsatisfactory or below average ratings in absolute scores on the PACT in 2005.

The proposal includes a research component utilizing both quantitative and qualitative research methodology. Teachers and students will be subjects of the research

and data will be drawn from the collective study group meetings, from classroom instruction, and from small group and individual observation and interviews.

A strong commitment from the College of Charleston and the Charleston County School District was evident. Dr. Frances C. Welch, Dean of the School of Education along with professors Paula Egelson, Mary Provost, and Emily Skinner presented the proposal on behalf of the College of Charleston and the Charleston County School District. Letters of commitment were included in the proposal from the College of Charleston and administrators from the Charleston County School District including one from Dr. Maria L. Goodlee-Johnson, Superintendent of Schools. Another positive for the proposal is the new center will nicely complement the existing Center for Partnerships to Improve Education that is housed in the School of Education. A commitment has been made by the College of Charleston to sustain the center beyond the five years of Commission funding.

Dr. Paula Egelson and Dr.Mary Provost will serve as Co-Directors of the Center. Both are experienced educators. Their resumes include a plethora of accomplishments and experiences. Dr. Emily Skinner joined the faculty in August, 2005 with a new doctorate degree from Teachers College, Columbia University, and specialization in New Literacy language and theory will contribute heavily to the work of the Center. Additionally, other faculty in the College of Charleston will be involved in the project.

SUMMARY:

The Review Panel felt the four goals and the four objectives of the proposal were succinctly and clearly stated to guide the project. It addressed both the pre-service and in-service aspects of increasing middle level teachers understanding and knowledge of improving education in literacy for middle level students. The focus on New Literacies provides a focus for the center. There is a demonstrated need for the six middle schools in the Charleston County School District who have been identified to be partners in the project. A research and evaluation plan for each year of the center has been carefully planned whereby both quantitative and qualitative data will be collected and analyzed.

The Panel as several suggestions for the College of Charleston that we think would strengthen the center.

- Clarify new strategies for what is needed to improve the literacy of middle level students. Be clear about what you want to do and why you are doing it.
- A stronger tie of New Literacies and content literacy.
- Look at the literature about the middle level adolescent in transition to build a better understanding of the needs of these young people and how best to help them improve. Emphasis should be placed on adolescent culture and middle school structures.

- We suggest you bring the whole team onboard at the beginning—build a true team concept by having everyone involved at all phases.
- Conduct a teacher forum to share what they are doing and what they have learned. Disseminate what the teachers have found that works and share.
- Bring parents into the project and have them become part of the New Literacy.
- Have teachers keep a journal and reflect frequently upon their experiences. The teacher as a reflective practitioner is a powerful educational tool.
- Explore other reading tests besides the Gates-MacGinitie instrument. Go to the Buros Mental Measurement Yearbook which will identify a number of reading tests for you and also give you a review of them and the validity and reliability.
- Provide evidence of a strong commitment from Charleston County School district for the duration of the project. Failure to maintain this commitment could jeopardize funding.
- Obtain copies of a new publication that has just been released by the National Association of Secondary School Principals as result of a lengthy study on the middle school. The title is: *Middle: Strategies for Leading Middle Level Reform.* Contact NASSP to obtain the book.

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The faculty and administration of the College of Charleston must continue its commitment for the full five years of the grant to successfully bring to fruition what is described in the center proposal and to improve the literacy/reading of middle level students. This will require careful monitoring and adjusting as the project unfolds over the five year period.

OTHER PROPOSALS SUBMITTED

The other four proposals reviewed were all unique in their own way and we commend each institution for their efforts. A brief presentation of each proposal will be presented to inform readers of the report about each proposal.

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA AIKEN

A Center of Excellence for Language Literacy in Science (CELLS) was proposed by the University of South Carolina Aiken. The purpose of the center was to develop and model state-of-the-art in-service and pre-service training programs that concentrated on literacy/reading and science at the middle school level. The Center would:

- Develop innovative practices that would enable school personnel to improve student achievement;
- Provide effective, sustained, high quality professional development;
- Incorporate field-based teacher education programs that involve technology-based instructional techniques' and
- Implement innovative practices for teaching children with diverse backgrounds and diverse learning styles.

The plan for achievement of the CELLS program is nicely planned with five goals and a series of objectives, activities, strategies and progress benchmarks for each. The five goals and stated objectives are:

- 1. **Goal One**: Developing and modeling exemplary teacher training programs.
 - a. **Objective one**: Incorporate reading in the content areas into content methods classes.
 - b. **Objective two:** Offer courses and workshops for in-service teachers.
 - c. **Objective three:** Develop pre-service, field based experiences in teaching.
- 2. **Goal Two:** Providing hands-on, inquiry-based, research-supported programs.
 - a. **Objective one:** Engage middle level students in enrichment programs.
- 3. **Goal Three:** Developing an influential constituency for the Center.
 - a. Objective one: Develop an influential constituency for CELLS.
 - b. **Objective two:** Insure that CELLS continues after funding from the state is discontinued.
 - c. **Objective Three:** Continue a strong relationship with the advisory board and the coordinating committee.
- 4. **Goal Four:** Achieving a position of leadership in the state.
 - a. **Objective one:** Develop and model a strong program.
 - b. **Objective two:** Disseminate information regarding reading in the content areas.
- 5. **Goal Five**: Developing a detailed research agenda.
 - a. **Objective one:** Compile an understanding through a literature review.
 - b. **Objective two**: Develop a research agenda.
 - c. **Objective three**: Application of research findings.

The evaluation plan follows the Guskey Model of professional development with both quantitative and qualitative data will be collected and analyzed for the purposes of monitoring and improving the program as it progresses (formative assessment) and to determine the effectiveness of the program (summative assessment).

A.L. Corbett Middle School in Aiken County, Allendale Elementary School, Fairfax Elementary School and Allendale Fairfax Middle Schools were identified as partners in the project with each being a low-performing school by the *CHE 2004 Report Card Ratings for Middle Schools*. Support for the proposal was provided by letters from administrators at USCA and the respective schools. The Center of Excellence for the Advancement of Rural, Under-Performing Schools (CLEARUPS) also agreed to be a partner in the project.

SUMMARY: The panel liked the table of contents and suggests that it be included in the format for future Centers of Excellence proposals. The research agenda Objective 2, under Goal Five, appeared to be a daunting task as seven different research questions were presented. The proposal seemed to stray away from the title of the Center which stated language literacy in science. Yet, in reading the proposal we found social studies, mathematics and English/language arts related to the sciences were included. The proposal needed to address more of the basic needs of middle school adolescents in transition, and especially low achieving students. More specificity in regard to strategies to help teachers identify the needs of these students, and strategies of instruction would have enhanced the proposal.

FURMAN UNIVERSTIY

A Center of Excellence in TESOL was proposed by Furman University. The purpose of the Center was to expand the current TESOL partnership between the Greenville County Schools and the Office of Graduate Studies that has prepared more than 75 teachers for ESOL certification in the last two years while providing innovative professional development in TESOL strategies.

Six objectives were stated for the Center:

- 1. **Goal One**: Provide focuses year-long, and sustainable professional development to increase student achievement for diverse learners through TESOL, enhanced Literacy across the curriculum, and instructional strategies that incorporate advanced technology and meets the needs of all learners.
- 2. **Goal Two**: Provide undergraduate tutorial programs for ESOL learners using preservice teachers and undergraduate language teachers in the ESOL concentration.
- 3. **Goal Three**: Continue to provide and expand TESOL opportunities for teachers for re-certification credit or a possible MA.
- 4. **Goal Four:** Provide teachers-selected follow-up activities that will contribute to Measurable results in student achievement for the target population.

- 5. **Goal Five**: Create a pre-and in-service teacher program that provides scientific research and data for South Carolina policy-makers regarding the growing ESOL population and its learner-specific needs.
- 6. **Goal Six:** Serve as a model for other institutions of Higher Education by assisting faculties from other institutions in the creation of ESOL programs through summer institutes or faculty development training.

Furman University would partner with the Greenville County School District and work with Berea Middle School and Lakeview Middle School in efforts to improve the achievement and report card rating of those schools. Furthermore, the Northwest Crescent Center (NWCC), a Furman Partner, would be another partner for the project

The Greenville County Schools and Furman University have worked collaboratively to develop the proposal and letters of support and participation from both parties were evident in the proposal. Dr. Troy Terry, Director of Graduate Studies, Dr. Nellie Hecker, Chair of the Education Department, and Dr. Newman Sanchez, Principal of Lakeview Middle School appeared before the Panel to make a presentation on the project.

SUMMARY: The Panel was impressed with the uniqueness of the proposal and appreciated the passion that Dr. Troy Terry exhibited in his presentation. Proposal guidelines called for middle level literacy and the Panel felt the Furman proposal didn't address this sufficiently. There was also a concern that a new Coordinator of TESOL at Furman would be hired and the new coordinator would become the Director of the Center, with Dr. Terry serving only on the advisory committee.

LANDER UNIVERSITY

A Center of Excellence for the Enhancement of Middle School Literacy was proposed by Lander University. The primary purpose of the Center stated in the proposal was to provide enhanced literacy opportunities for area middle-school learners. A broader view of literacy development will be employed and enhancement will be provided in three ways: 1) via technology, 2) via infusion of literacy across content areas, and 3) via accommodating and supporting the needs of a broad spectrum of diverse learners. To accomplish the three areas just identified above, the Center proposed to do this by (a) providing in-service and pre-service education in each of the three areas, and (b) bringing middle school learners to Lander's campus for orchestrated literacy experiences.

Although no specific goals or objectives were clearly identified, it was stated that the Center would provide learning experiences for middle school learners that make use of the best practices related to technology, diverse learning styles, and cross-curricular emphases in literacy. Middle school learners from Greenwood District 51 (Ware Shoals) and, potentially, other members of districts in the Western Piedmont Education Consortium (WPEC) which represents ten school districts in the greater Greenwood geographical area will travel to Lander University several times during the course of each academic year. Pre-service teachers at Lander will develop learning experiences for these visiting middle school students. The first year will focus on the use of technology to enhance literacy development by creating interactive web sites to support participation in literary criticism. The second year will focus on making content in various disciplines come to life using the Reader's Theater. The third year will provide literacy experiences for a broad spectrum of diverse learners and includes ways to access critical context in texts.

A unique aspect of the proposal was the inclusion of Special Education pre-service students at Lander University as financial support for six undergraduate special education majors from underrepresented populations will be provided if the project is funded.

Supporting documents included a written partnership agreement between Lander University and Greenwood District 51 and a letter indicating support from the Western Piedmont Education Consortium.

The research agenda indicated that both quantitative and qualitative methodologies will be used in the assessment and evaluation process. Surveys will be conducted with faculty and students in the project, the PACT and MAP scores will be utilized in the evaluation process. It was also proposed that the Dominie Portfolio Assessment Kit be used to collect data related to reading behaviors, fluency, and comprehension of all middle school learners in District 51.

Dr. Dava O'Connor, Chair of the Department of Teacher Education, Dr. Judith Neufeld, Assistant Professor of Education, Dr. Ray Wilson, Executive Director of the Western Piedmont Education Consortium, Superintendent Fay Sprouse of the Ware Shoals School District 51 was in attendance to present and support the proposal. Marie Milam, program coordinator for Greenwood District 51 will serve as the partner liaison with the center.

SUMMARY: The Review Panel felt the proposal did not provide enough specificity in regard to how it would promote middle level literacy for students. Goals and objectives were not specified and it was difficult to get a sense of the project other than in broad generalities. A concern was expressed in that there did not appear to be a faculty member with expertise in middle level education as a member of the center team. A concern was also raised about the use of the Domine Assessment Kit and it was suggested that perhaps there were others assessment tools more appropriate that need to be examined. It was also the panels belief that scholarships need to be provided beyond special education and

it wasn't clear what these scholarship students would be doing to contribute to the improvement of literacy for middle level students.

CLEMSON UNIVERSITY

Clemson University proposed the creation of a Center of Excellence in Genetics and Life Sciences. The stated purpose of the center was to develop a comprehensive and innovative program to improve instruction in science literacy/reading levels at middle schools that failed to meet Adequate Yearly Progress. Six goals with outcomes were presented in the proposal.

- 1. Professional development for in-service middle school teachers through graduate credit courses in natural history and genetics/biotechnology.
- 2. Engaging students in science literacy/reading activities through laboratory field trips to the South Carolina DNA Learning Center (SCDNALC) and summer camp activities.
- 3. Provide 10 scholarships each year for middle school students to attend courses offered by the Summer Science, Engineering and Architecture Enrichment Programs at Clemson University.
- 4. Service learning for undergraduate pre-service education majors and life science Majors as they serve as laboratory and teaching assistants for the SCDNALC and Summer Camp.
- 5. Sponsor a "Scientist to School" visitation program to bring Clemson science faculty, students, and advanced undergraduates to middle schools to showcase recent applications of biology, associated careers, and to interact with students.
- 6. A collaborative research project with undergraduate education and science majors, science and education faculty, and representatives from the participating middle schools to develop an innovative science literacy/reading program.

The proposal was presented by Dr. Robert Ballard, Director of the SCDNALC at Clemson University and Dr. Cheryl Lane, Assistant Professor of Middle Level Education. Dr. Ballard and Dr. Barbara Speziale were identified as co principal investigators for the project. The Greenville County Schools were listed as partners in partners in the proposal. Although a representative of the Schools was not at the presentation to the panel, a letter from Dr. Katherine Howard, Associate Superintendent of Schools was included in the proposal. A written letter of agreement was presented substantiating the cooperative partnership. Additionally, the South Carolina Life: Natural History of South Carolina and the Campbell Museum of Natural History were also identified as partners for the center project.

SUMMARY: The Review Panel found this proposal intriguing, but missing the basic need of addressing literacy/reading for middle level students. There was a strong

academic emphasis on science content, but meeting the needs of low achieving middle school students were lacking. It was commendable that 10 scholarships would be available each year for middle school students to attend courses offered at Clemson University. However, it was never identified the content of the courses nor how they would contribute to improving the literacy of low achieving middle level students. It was not clear what the criteria would be for the selection of these 10 students each year or if they would be low achieving students. From the description provided in the proposal, it would appear that 10 students each year would be given a scholarship to attend the oneweek existing summer enrichment program, with students choosing from either Biology I or DNA Science. Evidence of a stronger relationship to the College of Education was felt to be needed for such a project to truly meet the needs of middle level students. Little attention was given to specific strategies of instruction to identify and meet the basic needs of middle level teachers and adolescents in transition. The guidelines for proposals called for emphasis on improving the literacy/reading of low achieving middle level students. This proposal appeared to be of a means to continue programs already in existence with a strong academic content the driving force rather than focusing on the needs of improving the literacy of low achieving middle level students.

GENERAL COMMENTS ABOUT ALL THE PROPOSALS

- 1. The focus of the call for proposals was specifically about literacy/reading and how to improve the education of low achieving middle school students. Yet, some of the proposals read like maintaining an existing "pet project" with a little literacy thrown in!
- 2. There is a basic need for middle school teachers in the area of literacy. Proposals lacked a clear plan to address the basic needs of middle school teachers and adolescents in transition. Assumptions were made of what should be done without any needs assessment or clear understanding of the needs of low achieving students.
- 3. More specificity of how pre-service and in-service teachers learn about the reading process and effective instruction practices that promote literacy. Many ineffective practices such as vocabulary in isolation, round-robin reading, etc. are being used. We need to answer the question, what teachers can do when kids "read it" but "don't get it?"
- 4. Proposals needed to address and meet the needs of in schools, not meet the agenda of higher education institutions.

- 5. It would have been better if the proposals were to go back to the basics of being clear about what you are doing, why you are doing it, i.e. purpose, plan, budget, outcomes/evaluations.
- 6. There is a newly released report on middle level schools that is the result of a lengthy study of middle schools by the National Association of Secondary School Principals. The report is titled, *Breaking Ranks in the Middle: Strategies for Leading Middle Level Reform.* Ted Sizer and Deborah Meier contributed a foreword that introduces the book and its contribution. There are thirty recommendations from the study clustered in three broad areas, 1) collaborative leadership and professional learning communities, 2) personalizing your school environment, and 3) making learning personal: curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The report can be obtained at the following address:

NASSP 1904 Association Drive Reston, VA 20191-1537

Submitted by:

Dr. Ron Joekel, Chair Review Panel

Attachment 2

Centers of Excellence FY 2005-2006 Review Panel Members

Dr. Ronald Joekel, Professor Chair Administration and Higher Education University of Nebraska Lincoln, NE

Dr. Barbara Goggans Waccamaw High School Georgetown County School District Pawleys Island, SC

Dr. Kelly Harrison Maguire Assistant Professor Converse College Spartanburg, SC

Dr. Jennifer L. Wilson Assistant Professor Instruction and Teacher Education University of South Carolina Columbia, SC

Dr. Phyllis Pendarvis Retired Middle School Principal and Grant Coordinator Middle Level Teacher Education Initiative Columbia, SC

Ms. Caroline Savage Middle Level English Language Arts Consultant SC State Department of Education Columbia, SC

Dr. Lynn Kelley Academic Affairs and Licensing Commission on Higher Education Columbia, SC

Dr. Paula Gregg
CHE Staff Member, Program Coordinator, and Panel Facilitator
Academic Affairs and Licensing
Commission on Higher Education
Columbia, SC

Proposal Abstracts

Clemson University – Center of Excellence for Genetics and Life Sciences – Dr. Robert Ballard

Purpose of the Project. The purpose of the Center of Excellence in Genetics and Life Sciences is to develop a comprehensive and innovative program to improve instruction in science literacy/reading levels at middle schools that failed to meet Adequate Yearly Progress.

Activities to be implemented. The activities we propose to develop to engage middle school students in science literacy are as follows: (1) professional development for inservice middle school teachers through graduate credit courses in natural history and genetics/ biotechnology, (2) engaging students in science literacy/reading activities through laboratory field trips to the SCDNALC, (3) provide 10 scholarships each year for middle school students to attend courses offered by the Summer Science, Engineering and Architecture Enrichment Programs at Clemson University, (4) service learning for undergraduate pre-service education majors and life science majors as they serve as laboratory and teaching assistants for the SCDNALC and Summer Camp activities, (5) sponsor a 'Scientist to School' visitation program to bring Clemson science faculty, graduate students, and advanced undergraduates to middle schools to showcase recent applications of biology, associated careers, and to interact with students, and (6) a collaborative research project with undergraduate education and science majors, science and education faculty, and representatives from the participating middle schools to develop an innovative science literacy/reading program.

Target population to be served. Students and teachers students at middle schools that failed to meet Adequate Yearly Progress.

Expected outcomes. The outcome of the program is to improve literacy/reading levels in science and to improve the academic success of students at middle schools that failed to meet Adequate Yearly Progress.

School district partner. Greenville School District

College of Charleston – Center of Excellence for the Advancement of New Literacies in Middle Grades – Dr. Paula Egelson and Dr. Mary Provost

The School of Education at the College of Charleston is partnering with the Charleston County School District to create the Center for the Advancement of New Literacies in Middle Grades. The Center for the Advancement of New Literacies in Middle Grades will focus its efforts on the literacy development of diverse and struggling middle school students and their teachers in the Charleston County School District in order to improve their engagement and performance. In addition, the center will support the literacy development of College of Charleston pre-service teachers. This center will be devoted to using a 21st century definition of reading that conceptualizes literacy as socially-situated and culturally-constructed (Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanic, 2000) and of text to include both print and non-print texts so as to: (1) acknowledge the vast literacy competencies in adolescents' literacy repertoires; (2) link out-of-school and in-school literacies to assist pre-service teachers, in-service teachers and middle school students in becoming better users of text in their 21st century world; and, (3) advance the understanding and implementation of New Literacies teaching strategies for middle school teachers and pre-service teachers.

The Center for the Advancement of New Literacies in Middle Grades will support low-performing middle schools in the Charleston area through in-school professional development teams, mentored teacher instruction on the strategies within New Literacies, and College of Charleston faculty and classroom teacher-led research to improve literacy performance. Educator teams in selected low-performing schools will be trained on how to implement collective study groups for the purposes of: (1) identifying students' uses of New Literacies in school; and (2) connecting students' New Literacies to appropriate research-based literacy instructional strategies that address English/language arts standards in their classrooms.

Collective study groups will share a core of readings on New Literacies. Study groups will meet weekly to discuss the readings and to explore appropriately related literacy strategies. Members will develop a plan to implement these strategies in their respective classrooms and share results at the next meeting. Each meeting will be organized so that educators can share results of previous practice and strategy application, discuss perceptions of the instructional strategies, and collectively decide on a course of action to apply new content.

Six middle schools in the Charleston County School District are targeted for participation. They include Alice Birney Middle School, Brentwood Middle School, McClellanville Middle School, Morningside Middle School, R.D. Schroder Middle School and West Ashley Middle School. A total of 3,782 students were served in these schools during 2005 according to the Annual School Report Card (www.myschools.com or www.sceoc.org). Of these students, 3,033 were from minority populations.

Additionally, 684 or 18% of the students educated in these schools had identified disabilities. All of the schools had unsatisfactory or below average ratings in absolute scores on the PACT in 2005. The intended outcomes for this initiative include improved student and teacher engagement and performance in literacy.

Furman University - Center of Excellence in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages) – Dr. Troy Terry

Furman University's TESOL Center will be a state-of-the-art, pre-service and inservice teacher preparation program, allowing for the innovative collaboration of Furman University's Education Department, Office of Graduate Studies in Education, and the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures with the School District of Greenville County's Lakeview Middle School, Berea Middle School and the Northwest Crescent Center. The purpose of the Center is to expand the current TESOL partnership between the Greenville County Schools and the Office of Graduate Studies that has prepared more than 75 teachers for ESOL certification in the last two years while providing innovative professional development in TESOL strategies.

Activities provided include: Innovative and research-based Professional Development in inclusive instructional strategies for all students of diverse backgrounds (including ESOL students) for all in-service teachers at both schools; Professional Development in standards-based reading/writing strategies that are skill-centered (research-based literacy strategies are a key component of meeting the needs of diverse learners); Professional Development in technology-based instructional techniques for ESOL students including use of Rosetta Stone and Plaza Communitaria; Professional Development in hands-on, student-based instructional strategies that meet the needs of all learners, and improve overall student achievement; Undergraduate, bi-lingual tutoring programs using Furman University foreign language majors; Graduate courses for teachers for ESOL certification, an M.A. with a concentration in TESOL, or for recertification; Undergraduate opportunities for pre-service teachers in using inclusive instructional strategies for all students of diverse backgrounds including ESOL students; Undergraduate opportunities for pre-service teachers with practicum placements in ESOL or culturally-diverse classrooms; and on-going assessment and effective research in teaching English to speakers of other languages; inclusive instructional strategies in the diverse classroom; and the effects of technology and inclusive strategies on student achievement in low-performing middle schools.

Target Population: By focusing on in-service and pre-service teacher preparation in a growing area of instructional need, Furman University and its partners will meet the needs of teachers and ESL students in Greenville County. Both partnering middle schools are Title I schools with large, growing populations of non-or limited- English speakers, primarily Hispanic. As the innovative program expands, our Center's model will be

exported state-wide and provide relevant theory and practice for in increasing student achievement for diverse learners.

Outcomes: Predicted outcomes will be a growth in the number of ESOL certified teachers in Greenville County and in the Upstate of South Carolina; all teachers in both middle schools will receive strategies for dealing with non- and limited English speakers in their classrooms and strategies for teaching students of diverse backgrounds; and increases in achievement for targeted students at both middle schools. Evaluation will be based on data from TESOL enrollment; evaluations from teachers participating in staff development, journals of tutors at both middle schools, and results of the project on student achievement at both schools.

Partners: Furman University's Office of Graduate Studies, Education Department, Department of Modern Languages and Literatures in collaboration with the Greenville County Schools' Berea Middle School, Lakeview Middle School and the Northwest Crescent Center. More than 150 teachers and 1,400 middle school students will be impacted initially along with more than 35 Furman faculty and administrators.

Lander University – Center of Excellence in Adolescent Literacy and Learning – Dr. Dava O'Connor

Purpose. The primary purpose of the South Carolina Center of Excellence for the Enhancement of Middle School Literacy at Lander University is to provide enhanced literacy opportunities for area middle-school learners. A broader view of literacy development will be employed and enhancement will be provided in three ways: via technology, via infusion of literacy across content areas, and via accommodating and supporting the needs of a broad spectrum of diverse learners. To accomplish this purpose, the Center will (a) provide inservice and preservice education in each of these three areas and (b) bring middle-school learners to Lander's campus for orchestrated literacy experiences. A secondary focus of this Center will be to increase the number of highly qualified middle level and special education teachers from under-represented populations to meet the staffing needs of school districts in this region as well as research and dissemination of findings to the state.

Activities to be implemented. A variety of means will be utilized to address the goals of this Center of Excellence. First, middle school learners from Greenwood District 51 will travel to Lander University to participate in literacy enhancement activities. These experiences will serve multiple objectives: 1) to motivate and engage middle level learners in authentic and meaningful literacy activities; 2) to broaden their perspective on what literacy can be; 3) to increase the likelihood that they will begin to prepare themselves for post-secondary education. During the first year these experiences will focus on the use of technology to enhance literacy development in such ways as developing interactive web sites. Activities during the second year will focus on making content in various discipline areas come to life via such means as readers' theater. The

third year will focus on providing literacy experiences that accommodate for the needs of diverse learners such as techniques for eliciting critical information from text. Follow up lessons will also be prepared to assist with generalization to in-school literacy instruction.

Professional development activities will also play a major role in building a repertoire of effective practices in literacy instruction for this Center. A similar three year cycle will be employed to increase inservice teacher expertise in these areas through graduate courses and/or professional development opportunities. Some of the graduate coursework will meet add-on requirements for middle level or for special education certification. These opportunities will be open to area school districts from the Western Piedmont Consortium as well as Greenwood District 51.

<u>Target population to be served.</u> Greenwood District 51 (Ware Shoals) middle school learners will be the primary population served by this grant during the initial stages. A second population served by the Center will be inservice teachers who will participate in course work and/or continuing education units that deal with middle level literacy development. Finally, Lander teacher candidates from a variety of certifying areas will also participate in this Center's activities.

Expected outcomes. Participating middle school learners' average PACT and MAP scores are expected to rise. Additionally, teacher and student attitudes towards literacy and the use of technology to improve literacy are expected to improve. Finally, teacher attitudes toward supporting the development of literacy skills in diverse learners is also expected to improve. Research and dissemination of findings is planned.

School and/or district partners. Greenwood District 51 (Ware Shoals), multiple member districts of the Western Piedmont Education Consortium, and Lander University are the partnering institutions that support this proposed South Carolina Center of Excellence for the Enhancement of Middle School Literacy at Lander University.

USC-Aiken – Center of Excellence for Language Literacy in Science (CELLS) - Dr. Gary Senn

<u>Purpose of the project</u>: The purpose of CELLS is to develop and model state-of-the-art in-service and pre-service teacher training programs that concentrate on literacy/reading and science at the middle school level. CELLS will develop innovative practices that enable school personnel to improve student achievement; provide effective, sustained, high quality professional development; incorporate field-based teacher education programs that involve technology-based instructional techniques; and implement innovative practices for teaching children with diverse backgrounds and

diverse learning styles. CELLS will model these programs as it provides professional development for higher education faculty around the state of South Carolina.

Activities to be implemented: Activities include hands-on activities at local schools and at the Ruth Patrick Science Education Center (RPSEC) for middle level students. While activities will concentrate on literacy/reading training programs focused on the sciences, other subject areas will also be included. Science activities chosen for this project will also include aspects of social studies and mathematics. The RPSEC has a long history of successfully offering such programs and will develop further this successful strategy. A variety of professional development activities will be provided for in-service teachers. A variety of delivery modes will be employed including school-based; university-based; web-based; and two-way, interactive video-based. Activities will be available for pre-service teachers including changes to the core curriculum with input from the CELLS staff and activities with students from low-performing schools. Higher education faculty will engage in professional development activities that will be held at USCA and have a distance education component.

<u>Target population to be served</u>: The target population will be students and teachers from low-performing schools as identified by the CHE, 2004 Report Card Ratings for Middle Schools. During the first year of the project, one school from Aiken County and three schools from Allendale County will participate in the project. Preservice teachers and higher education faculty will also be served.

Expected outcomes: A new Middle Level School program at USCA will begin in January 2007. CELLS will work closely with this program to develop it into a model program for the State of South Carolina that will prepare effective middle level educators. CELLS will empower teachers by providing professional development activities that are aligned with South Carolina Professional Development Standards. These activities will enable teachers to understand the state content and assessment standards and implement strategies to help all students meet or exceed those standards. Students involved with CELLS will improve their standardized test scores as a result of engaging in meaningful, hands-on activities that inspire them to learn.

School and/or district partners: During Year One of the project, CELLS will partner with A.L. Corbett Middle School in Aiken County. CELLS will also partner with three Allendale schools: Allendale Elementary School, Fairfax Elementary School and Allendale Fairfax Middle School. CELLS will work with fifth grade students and teachers from the two elementary schools because of input provided by teachers and curriculum specialists from the district. The intent is to help these fifth grade students make a successful transition to the middle school in the following year. During subsequent years, CELLS will partner with other low-performing schools in other districts.

Attachment 4

Centers of Excellence

Center Name	Project PI	Institution	Address	2003 - 2004	2004 - 2005	2005 - 2006	2006 - 2007	Year of Funding
Center of Excellence for Engineering and Computing Education	Dr. Jed S. Lyons	University of South Carolina	College of Engineering and Information Technology	\$141,661.00	\$135,000.00	\$112,500.00	\$106,245.00	Yr 4 (of 5)
Center of Excellence for the Advancement of Rural, Under- Performing Schools (CEARUPS)	Dr. Jeff Priest	University of South Carolina - Aiken	School of Education	\$142,393.00	\$133,657.00	\$112,870.00	\$106,794.00	Yr 4 (of 5)
Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty	Dr. Tammy Pawloski	Francis Marion University	School of Education		\$150,000.00	\$135,000.00	\$112,500.00	Yr 3 (of 5)
Center of Excellence in Collaborative Learning	Dr. Maryellen Ham	University of South Carolina - Beaufort	USCB/JCSD Partnership		\$133,567.00	\$120,210.00	\$100,175.00	Yr 3 (of 5)
Center of Excellence for Adolescent Literacy and Learning	Dr. Victoria Ridgeway	Clemson University	School of Education			\$149,978.00	\$134,980.00	Yr 2 (of 5)